

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting the degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, consisting of comprising:

~~placing the specimen into a container in the absence of any~~  
degradation-inhibiting agents, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics,

wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides.

Claim 2. (Canceled).

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said specimen is obtained from a human, dog, pig, rat or mouse.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said natriuretic peptide is brain natriuretic peptide (BNP).

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) A method for inhibiting the degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, consisting of comprising:

placing the specimen into a container in the absence of aprotinin, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics,

wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A method for measuring mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, consisting of comprising the steps of:

placing the specimen into a container in the absence of any degradation-inhibiting agents, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, wherein said

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material inhibits the activation of a substance, which once activated, degrades the mammalian natriuretic peptides; and measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means.

Claims 7-11. (Canceled)